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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [AF](#) [FR](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: GERMAN CONCERNS ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE AFGHAN
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND FRENCH-HOSTED REGIONAL CONFERENCE

REF: A. BERLIN 1412
[1](#)B. 11/14 MOELLER-ANGHA TELCON

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The German MFA is concerned that if the Afghans decide at this late date to bring forward next year's presidential election, and hold it in April, May or June, rather than in September, as previously agreed, ISAF and the international community might have difficulty providing the required support. The MFA also has misgivings about an Afghanistan regional conference that France is hosting December 14 and wonders if it has been coordinated with and agreed upon by the United States. END SUMMARY.

TIMING OF THE AFGHAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Office Director for Afghanistan Affairs Ruediger Koenig raised concerns November 14 with Post about the timing of next year's presidential election in Afghanistan. He noted that at the initiative of some in the Afghan parliament, there was some re-consideration of the previous agreement to hold the election in September. Koenig understood that the September date was troublesome for some because it comes four months after President Karzai's mandate officially ends in May. Koenig noted that the Afghan constitution required the election to be held at least 30 days before the end of the President's term, which would technically require the election no later than April. However, Koenig thought trying to move the election forward at this late date to April, May or June could make it very difficult for ISAF and the rest of the international community to provide the necessary support to ensure it was a free and fair election. He hoped the Afghans would stick to the original agreed date of September.

[1](#)3. (C) In this connection, he emphasized again, as he has in the past (see ref A), that this be an Afghan-led process and that the Afghans have ownership of it. Regarding the timing of the election, for example, the Afghans had to take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. These could not simply be pushed off on the international community to solve. Koenig was concerned about continuing talk about the election being a "litmus test" for ISAF and rest the international community, which he saw as undermining the notion of Afghan ownership.

FRENCH-HOSTED REGIONAL CONFERENCE

[1](#)4. (C) Koenig also raised concerns about a regional conference that he said France planned to host December 14 outside of Paris involving Afghanistan, its six immediate neighbors, the P-5 member states, Germany, Italy and the EU.

He noted that the conference was supposed to discuss security, terrorism and narcotics, but as far as he was aware, no one from NATO or ISAF had been invited to participate. It also appeared that none of the major donors from the Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, UAE, etc.) would be included. Koenig opined that the conference seemed primarily intended by the outgoing French EU presidency to promote the role of the EU in the region.

15. (C) Clearly skeptical about the utility of such a conference, Koenig wondered to what degree it had been coordinated with and agreed upon by the United States. His understanding was that Afghanistan and the six neighbors would send ministers to the meeting, but that all the rest would be represented at sub-ministerial level. He said current plans were for MFA Director General for Asia Policy Hans Henning Blomeyer-Bartenstein to represent Germany.

16. (SBU) Based on ref B guidance, Post has already gone back to Koenig to explain that the U.S. does, in fact, support the conference as a one-day, one-time meeting and that it will be represented by a senior official. We have encouraged Koenig to obtain further details about the conference directly from the French.

TIMKEN JR